



# Child and Youth Protection Policy

First Community United Methodist Church of Medford

## Purpose

Our purpose for establishing this Child and Youth Protection Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## Background

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God. Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones ... it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that "Children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse" (para. 162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong (From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*, 384-386).

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, First Community United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of child and youth abuse in our church.

## **Covenant Statement**

First Community United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of Massachusetts law.

## **Staff Selection and Supervision Guidelines**

All volunteer and paid staff who work with children and youth at FCUMC must:

- be 21+ years old for Youth Group or 18+ years old for Sunday School;
- be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising;
- be a member of FCUMC or regular attendee and active in church activities for at least 6 months, or a transferred member from a different church and approved by the Staff Parish Relations Committee;
- complete and sign an application and the related waivers, giving permission to check references and background information, including criminal record, when the Pastor or the Staff Parish Relations Committee requires (Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for children, youth, or vulnerable adults).

Whenever supervising activities, involving children and youth at FCUMC,

- two adults will be present;
- children and youth will be checked in to and out of a church sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or people authorized by parent / legal guardian;
- all classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from hallway or remain open while occupied;
- a parent or legal guardian will be notified if their child(ren) leaves the church building for related outdoor activity;
- there will be no use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment;
- there will be no insulting remarks, shouting, or threatening in any case.

## **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth and vulnerable adult will be “surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 96).